

**An I.S. Pamphlet**



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# **Class Struggle Unionism**



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International  
Socialist  
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# Class Struggle Unionism

This pamphlet is adapted from the text of a document that was presented to the International Socialists National Committee meeting in June, 1974 and then to the national convention held in Detroit over Labor Day weekend, 1974. It presents a revolutionary socialist approach to Trade Union work. That is, it comes to grips with what has been a major point of controversy in the left: what is the relation between mass work, particularly within the working class, and building the revolutionary party?

Virtually every left group has fallen apart on this question, consistently counterposing the two tasks. The International Socialists has always held that the two are intertwined, that one cannot be carried out without the other. We stated in a 1973 convention document:

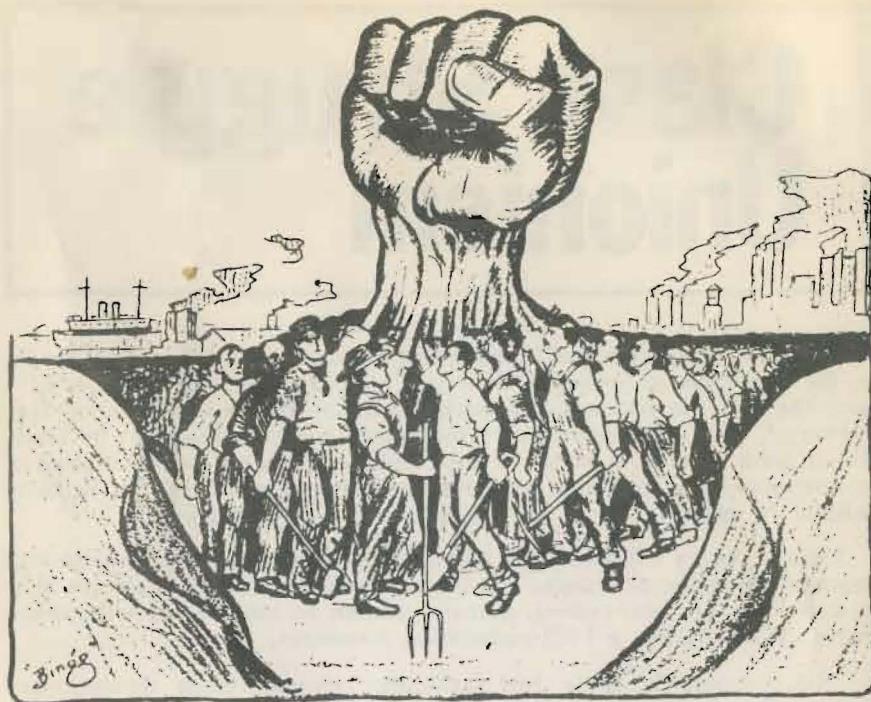
"To counterpose these two tasks (the creation of a revolutionary vanguard party as part of a self-conscious working class movement; and the creation of that movement itself) and to see our role as related to only the building of a revolutionary party, is to misunderstand the relationship of that party to the class—the relationship of the leadership of the class to the masses of workers. The question of party and class does not arise only at the point of taking power, when the workers' state must be based upon the broadest organizations of the working class—workers' councils—and the revolutionary party making up its vanguard elements—its leadership. Nor is it a question only when the masses of advanced workers are beginning to form and join the revolutionary party. It is as important today as at any of those other points in time. Thus the role we play in rebuilding a self-conscious working class movement, and our leadership role within the developing rank and file leadership, is integrally tied to our task of building the revolutionary party. Only by playing an active role today based upon our program and perspectives will we be laying the basis for playing the role of conscious revolutionary leadership of the class tomorrow."

What follows is an elaboration of that point of view. Though it was originally written for IS members in order to clarify our perspectives, it is a theoretical advance for the whole revolutionary movement. We hope this viewpoint will stimulate discussion in the left. We are anxious to discuss and debate it with others.

The current economic crisis presents great opportunities to revolutionaries based on this perspective. It is vital that the theory be raised to the level of practice, that we actually go about building a self-conscious left-wing in the working class and a revolutionary party to lead the struggle to its conclusion. We urge those who agree with us to join us in this task.

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### 1. Revolutionary Strategy in a Time of Crisis

The starting point of IS labor perspectives is the need to build a revolutionary socialist party in the working class. We have adopted essentially the same method and approach as that employed by the early Comintern in Britain and the U.S., by the Trotskyist movement in the late 1930's and 40's, and by the British International Socialists today. That is, ours is a specific strategy for building the revolutionary party in a situation where the general crisis of capitalism is sharpening but the party itself is only a tiny minority in the class. It demands of revolutionaries that they function within the existing unions and that they exploit the contradictions between the needs of the ranks and the collaborationist methods of the bureaucrats to build a movement in which the party can grow by participating in the struggle and providing leadership.

Objective conditions are laying the basis for the development of a rank and file movement inside U.S. labor. Continuing decline, growing instability, inflation and stagnation, sharp fluctuations, shorter and shorter booms followed by ever more severe economic crises, will be characteristic of the coming period.

As conditions of economic stagnation and decline intensify, the present labor bureaucracy will find itself unable to respond in a fashion that effectively satisfies the ranks. It is a bureaucracy whose collaborationist methods and consciousness were molded in the years of post war capitalist prosperity. It will become increasingly disoriented—caught between a vicious capitalist attack on the workers and growing unrest in the ranks.

Under these conditions, a layer of militant activist workers will emerge.

The IS wishes to embed itself in this emerging layer, help raise its consciousness, to participate with it in building a rank and file movement—giving what leadership and direction we can. We wish to win this emerging movement to a policy of Class Struggle Unionism.

Neither collaborationists, reformists or stalinists will be able to provide satisfactory leadership that meets the real needs of this layer. Our politics, on the other hand, will permit the IS to play a leadership role thoroughly disproportionate to our present small size and influence.

Our presence in this emerging layer will permit us to influence it with our revolutionary Marxist politics and to recruit workers from it who through their experience in working with us, learn the value of our full political program. In this process, the IS will be able to transform itself into a revolutionary workers organization.

Parallel to the development of a militant layer within the unions will be similar developments among unorganized and unemployed workers, and also in relationship to black work and community movements and struggles. The revolutionary workers organization will participate in these movements and struggles as well, giving what leadership it can. Within all struggles, we will attempt to relate the specific to the general: the union struggle to the community struggle to the political struggle. It will attempt to break through parochial and sectional consciousness.

The revolutionary party will be built through the interaction between the revolutionary workers organization and the growing rank and file and insurgent movements that it helps to shape and lead. We cannot predict the exact way the party will be built. It could be through direct recruitment, through regroupment, through the crystallization, under the influence of a revolutionary organization, of a revolutionary tendency within a mass workers' organization, or through some combination of those developments.

This outline of our overall labor perspectives leaves a number of concrete questions still to be answered. In day to day trade union work, what distinguishes the functioning of an IS member from that of a non-Marxist trade union militant? How do we use our trade union work to interject revolutionary Marxist ideas into the emerging advanced layer? Are our trade union work and our fight to bring revolutionary Marxism to the working class basically separate tasks which relate to one another only by virtue of the fact that the same individual member does both? What is the relationship between the politics we fight for inside the trade union movement and our full revolutionary Marxist program? In short, what is involved in our policy of Class Struggle Unionism and how do we fight to bring it into practice?

### 2. Class and Ideology, Spontaneism and Consciousness

Before going on to answer these questions, we need to take a closer look at the emerging layer of militant, activist workers toward whom our whole perspective is oriented. A sure feel for working class consciousness and the dynamics of its struggles is required of any effective proletarian group. The IS has been able to move forward only on the basis of paying careful attention to the experiences of our industrialized comrades.

We have learned the great difficulties we face even in just developing a relatively solid rank and file opposition caucus. The primary problem is bourgeois ideology. It is rare for even the most angry and militant worker



to reject, spontaneously, the ideological basis of the class collaborationist policy of the bureaucracy. They know they are getting screwed. Some think the problem boils down to dishonesty and payoffs from the company. Others feel that the problem boils down to one of sincerity, intelligence, having a sharp tongue, or just some undefined quality of personal strength, will and charisma. They conclude that to improve the union you put into office younger people who are more honest, more sincere, more dedicated, more intelligent, and more strong willed. Those who get into office on the basis of these views, of course, end up just like the people they replaced. Most workers become apathetic believing that the problems of the union are the problems of human nature, that you can't do anything about it anyway. And what's to keep a militant oppositionist from going over to the union administration when he or she discovers the kind of pressures they are under and that really, they're not such bad people after all?

Bourgeois ideology pervades the working class of every capitalist country. But its opposite, proletarian class consciousness, also exists throughout every working class. The two co-exist with a contradictory tension that determines the actual consciousness of the class. The pole of proletarian class consciousness is weaker in the United States than in the working class of practically any other capitalist country. This country lacks even such minimal class institutions as a rotten mass social democratic, Communist or labor party. Revolutionary Marxism, the only true repository of consistent proletarian class consciousness, has been absent from the U.S. working class for a quarter of a century.

The growing capitalist attack on the working class provides the objective basis for a resurgence of class consciousness. The class has new experiences which it finds increasingly difficult to satisfactorily understand on the basis of bourgeois ideology. Workers are more and more open to answers other than the traditional ones. They find themselves increasingly dissatisfied with the dominant institutions of leadership and authority and are open to considering alternatives. Often, conditions impel them into actions which contradict the values they hold. It is all this which creates the material preconditions for the emergence of a new militant activist layer within the working class.

Objective conditions are determinant in creating a rank and file movement. That is, workers do not give up their free time or make real sacrifices unless they feel they have no choice; that is, things are viewed as being so bad (this is not a matter of starvation) that one must do what is necessary. While the first workers to feel this are necessarily small in numbers, that is the dynamic.

Furthermore, the nature of the conditions that impel workers to build rank and file organizations determine to some degree the nature of the ideas these worker leaders develop. Rank and file leaders are strongly pushed toward opposition to any sort of productivity deal because of the nature of the crisis. The movement they lead will certainly be opposed to wage controls now that they have experienced them.

Nevertheless, objective conditions cannot, by themselves, determine the specific outlook of rank and file leaders. Nor can conditions save people from becoming demoralized or falling for opportunist leaders or solutions. To become a stable leadership, rank and file rebels must be won to a consistent point of view, must become in fact an self-conscious cadre with a class struggle outlook. This is not to say that the emergence of a rank and file movement in the unions requires the presence of class conscious revolutionaries. It is to say, however, that a rank and file movement cannot

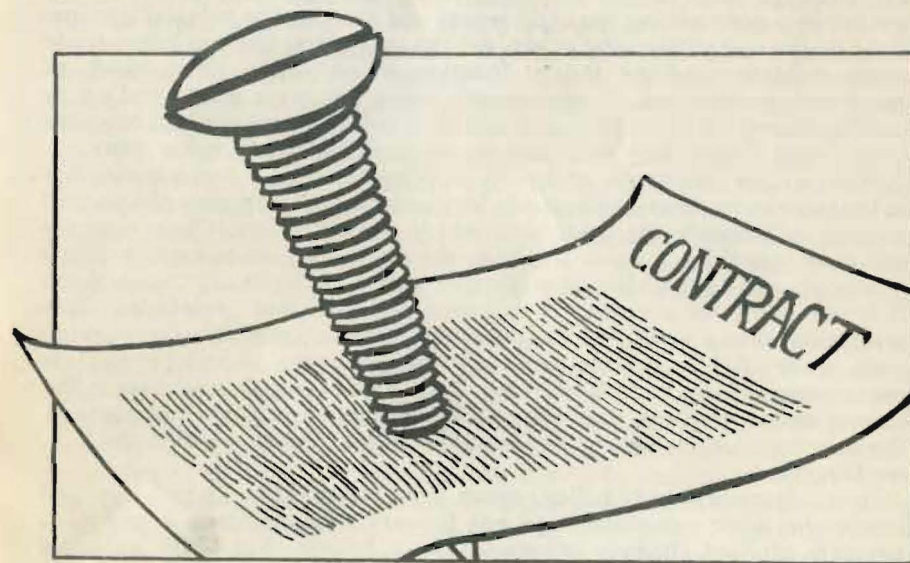
achieve stability or win long term victories without that participation.

Certainly, the greater the objective contradictions between the ranks and the bureaucracy, under impact of objective conditions, the greater will be the tendency for events to generate such a leadership group. But no one should count on a naively spontaneous view that this will just happen automatically. The collective class memory of U.S. workers has been largely eradicated. At present, even the simplest of class concepts, required to sustain such a leadership, don't just float in the air—nor can they be easily reintroduced into the working class. Objective conditions make this possible. But they don't automatically do it for us.

Class concepts reintroduced into the working class can rapidly take on a life of their own inside the class, if they speak to the real questions plaguing workers and provide satisfying answers. It is difficult for a worker to enter into principled and sustained opposition to the collaborationist bureaucracy unless that worker is in the process of moving beyond the confines of bourgeois ideology, in the direction of a Marxist world view. It is possible for workers to move spontaneously in the direction of Marxist ideas—but only after these ideas have already been introduced into the class from the outside. Ideologically, the main task of the present period in the United States is the reintroduction of elementary basic Marxist, class struggle concepts into the collective consciousness of the working class.

### 3. The Marxist Method Applied to Trade Union Questions

Ideas have meaning only insofar as they have practical consequences—only insofar as they lead to or influence action. The only reason that we, as political people, and as Marxists, want to influence the way people think, is because we want to influence the way they will act. Looking at the same question from the other direction, we can only say that an individual's consciousness has changed, if there has been a change in the way that individual acts and in the way the individual relates to others.





Our immediate goal is to establish consistent and systematic methods of winning workers to take a Marxist approach to trade union questions—the questions that have the most immediate and practical consequences. This does not yet make the worker a Marxist. To be a Marxist, one must understand broader political questions: the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian revolution, the popular front, the nature of fascism, the historical materialist world view, etc. Few U.S. workers today have the experience on which to really make up their mind on these questions—or the inclination to do the study necessary. With only rare exceptions, when we attempt to win workers today to these broad range of questions we usually find ourselves, more or less, asking them to take our word for it. And even if they do, we can normally only convince them in a shallow way, until they can relate this broad range of important ideas to their own experiences and activities. Until then, it is difficult to make Marxism much more than a bunch of interesting ideas. This is much more difficult among workers than among intellectuals who are trained to delve in systems of ideas.

It is much easier to win workers to take a Marxist approach to trade union questions. We can base this on concrete experience, on observable facts, on testable activities. We need not ask anybody to take our word for anything. Rather, we use common experience as the basis of the politics we teach. In this practical and concrete way, a worker can learn the Marxist method at least as it applies to trade union questions. But once this method is internalized, that worker is well on the way of grasping and accepting the full range of Marxist politics.

With our trade union work, IS members carry out two tasks at the same time. We act as the best and most consistent trade union militants. But at one and the same time, we use every experience, every struggle, every campaign—as an opportunity to win our co-workers to a Marxist approach to union questions. The two tasks are parallel and of equal importance. As trade union militants, we attempt to convince a worker, for example, to participate with us in a campaign of some sort. But at the same time, we use the experience of the campaign as an opportunity to influence the worker into generalizing the experiences and drawing the political lessons. If we do the one without the other, we are acting just like any other trade union militant—and we fail to function in our trade union work as revolutionary Marxists. To consistently make this error would end up as the flip side of the coin of those would-be revolutionaries who are too pure to get their hands dirty with day to day practical trade union work.

What we are attempting to do is to develop a tendency and a leadership in the labor movement which stands for class struggle unionism as opposed to class collaborationist leadership which already exists. Class struggle unionism is nothing more or less than the name we give to a union policy which is based on the Marxist method as applied to trade union questions. It is our name for a union policy based on consistent proletarian class principles. When we fight for class struggle unionism within the working class, we are fighting to reintroduce the basic concepts of proletarian class consciousness into the U.S. working class. Class struggle unionism is the banner under which we fight the collaborationist trade union bureaucracy, the only mass organized expression of bourgeois ideology inside the U.S. working class.

Every demand, every policy, every program that the IS puts forward inside the labor movement, we put forward as a demand, a policy, a program of class struggle unionism. If we believe that UAW militants

should run "Dump Woodcock" campaigns for convention delegate elections, then we argue for such campaigns as the policy of class struggle unionism inside the UAW. We do more than try to convince workers of activities, campaigns and issues. We try to win them to approach labor questions the way we do. We try to convince them to view developments inside the labor movement the way we do. And to sum it up, we try to convince them to think of themselves and to think of us, the IS members, both as part of the small, but growing, self-conscious class struggle tendency inside the labor movement.

#### 4. The Principles of Class Struggle Unionism

To the IS, the policies of class struggle unionism are nothing more or less than our own trade union policies, the trade union policies of revolutionary marxism. But of course, you don't have to be a marxist to be a class struggle unionist, and in fact, it's possible to express the basic political ideas from which class struggle policies flow in quite simple trade union terms. We can define class struggle unionism to be union policy that flows from the seven basic principles of class struggle unionism.

For us, each of these principles has a basically "algebraic" character. This means that they can be easily understood and accepted in a simple and shallow way. But through an individual's growth and political development, they can take on an increasingly rich meaning. In fact, each principle represents a fundamental Marxist concept, translated into the narrower language of trade unionism. Taken together, these principles form a bridge from trade union practice to revolutionary politics. In the struggle to politically influence the consciousness of the emerging layer of militant workers we press, to the extent possible, to make these seven principles the underlying ideas which shape the political common sense of this new strata.

**I. Class Struggle Policy:** One of the most basic ideas of Marxism is the class exploitation of the proletariat through the extraction of surplus value. For the capitalists, labor power is just a commodity to be bought at the minimum wage socially required to maintain and reproduce a productive proletariat. Translated into trade union terms, this means that working people only get what we fight for and only hold onto what the boss is afraid to take away. Our desire for a decent human life, for ourselves and our families, both on and off the job, conflicts with the boss's greed for the greatest possible profits. Workers and bosses have basically conflicting interests. For this reason there can be no peace between us. The weaker we are, the more the boss will take advantage. A class struggle union policy is one that can recognize these basic facts and understands that the main purpose of a union is to strengthen the position of workers in our fight with the bosses for a decent life.

The class collaborationists who now run our unions try to preach the opposite. They try to tell us that we and our bosses have basically the same interests. Conflicts happen when one side or the other steps out of line and acts in an unfair or greedy way. The job of a union, according to them, is to avoid conflict and bring about labor peace. When conflicts do arise, according to them, the union and the company should try to sit down together and find out who is to blame. If the workers are in violation of the contract, the union helps the company bring them in line. The only kind of union struggle the collaborationists consider to be legitimate, are ones that





follow the procedures laid out in the contract. And then these are only to be resorted to when the collaborationists believe the company acts in an unreasonable or irrational way.

There are thousands of examples we can point to every day to show the difference between a class struggle policy and a class collaborationist policy. We as opposed to the collaborationists, believe that the worker is always right, the company is always wrong. We view the contract as nothing more than a written truce in the class war. If we can violate the contract to our advantage and get away with it we will—just like we know the boss will. When we obey the contract it is out of respect for the power of the company, not out of any moral obligation. Our only interest in the contract is to use it to the advantage of the worker. We are perfectly willing to deceive or manipulate the boss if we can get away with it. In making demands on the company we consider only the needs of the workers and our bargaining strength. How easily the boss can afford to meet our demands is not our concern—providing we are strong enough to force him to pay.

**II. Rank and file approach:** Another basic idea of Marxism is that the emancipation of the proletariat is the task of the proletariat—the working class advances only through self-activity, consciousness and self-confidence.

We translate these concepts into trade union terms as the rank and file approach to unionism. The purpose of a union is to bring together the weak, isolated, individual workers into a single, powerful body. A union is strong only when the membership as a body is strong. The main job of union leadership is to keep the membership informed, educated and aware. They should always be seeking to instill in the membership an understanding that it must remain active, vigilant, self-confident, united, and ready to stand up and fight for what's right. Class struggle unionists refuse to get confused or lost in the maze of official procedures and red tape, but merely use the collective bargaining process and grievance procedures as tactical parts of a total approach.

This is the opposite of the bureaucratic and elitist approach of the collaborationists. All they really want the membership to do is passively support the leadership and do what the leadership says. They see no need for an informed, self confident, self activating membership. In their view of how a union works, union officials and management get together behind closed doors and settle things. The collaborationists think that the union officials make up the union, not the total membership. They see the job of the union as a middle man between the company and the workers, not as the organization and organizer of the workers in their fight against the company.

**III. Workers control:** Marxists understand that it is the struggle against capital that prepares workers themselves, as a class, to rule. To us trade unions are a school for socialism.

We translate this into trade union terms through the concept of workers control. The main reason why we as workers organize ourselves into unions is to gain more control over our own lives and our destinies. This is the reason we fight for higher wages and benefits. This is why we fight for more humane working conditions. In every area, we fight to limit and encroach on the prerogatives of management and to increase our own freedom of action and initiative as workers. We try to limit and control the authoritarian and arbitrary power management tries to exercise over us.





and try to extend to the greatest degree possible the rights of workers and our freedom of action. We press from within the system for the greatest possible power to organize and control our own work processes.

The notion of workers control and that of democratic unionism are closely related. We can't use our union to fight to gain more control over our own lives unless we democratically control our own union. And workers who democratically control a union always use it to fight to gain more control over their lives as workers.

In practice, collaborationists always reject the notions of workers control and democratic unionism. They respect, defend and enforce the prerogatives of management. They help management limit worker self-activity directed at gaining more control and help to maintain the authoritarian structure of the work place. They do all in their power to free themselves from the controlling pressures of the workers who want the union to fight for their real needs. They not only undermine union democracy, they also enforce and defend rules and procedures which limit the range of effective action open to the union.

**IV. Class solidarity:** Marxists believe that the interests of workers as a class supersede all individual, sectional and parochial interests. We translate this into the terms of today's trade union movement as class solidarity. Every victory of workers advances all workers—every defeat sets us all back. We fight for solidarity among all working people: those seeking work as well as the employed, those not yet organized into unions as well as the organized, working people of all countries of the world and not just working people of the U.S. In response to every major workers strike or struggle, the bosses try to defeat the workers with cries of damage

to the "public interest." We recognize no such thing as "public interest." There are only class interests—the interests of the workers versus the interests of the bosses.

The collaborationist bureaucracy undermines class solidarity. They defend the bosses notion that so called "public interest" comes before workers' interest. They refuse to use the power of the employed worker to vigorously defend the unemployed; refuse to use the power of the organized workers to defend and to help organize the unorganized; refuse to use the power of the union to support community struggles; refuse to champion international class solidarity but rather help the capitalists and politicians play off worker of one country against worker or another. We respond with the slogan: "An injury to one is an injury to all—a victory for any workers is a victory for the whole class."

**V. Champion liberation, support all struggles against oppression:** Marxists understand that capitalists use special oppression to divide and weaken the working class by undermining class unity. Special oppression pits white workers against black, male workers against female, pits the workers of one national group against workers of another. We also understand that effective fighting unity cannot be achieved between workers of the oppressed group and workers of the dominant group on the basis of any acceptance of social inequality. A precondition for effective unity is the commitment of workers from the dominant social groups to become champions of the fight against inequality and for the liberation of the oppressed.

We fight for these ideas inside the unions. In particular we fight to convince workers that in order to become effective class struggle unionists, and in order to accomplish our objectives, it is necessary to join in the fight against black and racial oppression, women's oppression, etc. We point out that no part of the labor movement (not even the rank and file, class struggle opposition) can expect to have the confidence or real support of workers who are subject to special oppression if it goes along with that oppression and refuses to lead a fight against it.

The racism and chauvinism of the union bureaucracy is covered only with the thinnest liberal veneer. They have not only refused to champion the fight against oppression, but have shown themselves to time and again be a party to it.

**VII. Labor's need for our own party:** As Marxists, we understand that basic defense and advancement of working class interests requires a political and not merely an economic response. It is only in the political struggle that the most fundamental class questions facing the working class can be raised and fought for. We call for and fight for a party which will consistently champion the interests of the working class. We understand in advance, that no reformist labor party can do this. Nor do we call for a reformist labor party. Our fight against collaborationism in the trade unions carries over into a fight against reformism in the realm of politics. In posing the need for a party that fights or a program to meet the real needs of workers, we are posing the need for a party that goes beyond reformism. We raise the question of the labor party in a way which algebraically poses the question of class power and workers government.

Both the Democratic and Republican Parties are controlled by the bosses and by politicians loyal to them. For these people, the private greed and profit of the powerful few are more important than the real interests of the vast majority. They use the government to defend the interests of the big



corporations against the workers. Working people need our own party so that we, the majority, can use the power of government to defend our interests against the greed of the wealthy and powerful few. We need a party that can fight for a political program based on real working peoples' needs and not on the defense of private profit. We argue for a labor party in terms of specific issues such as inflation, unemployment, wage controls, government anti-labor intervention, Watergate, etc.

Our collaborationist union leadership are already fully involved in politics through the Democratic Party. This is nothing more or less than an expression, in the realm of politics, of the same class collaborationist politics that they carry out within the unions. They refuse to lead workers, the majority, to fight for our own interests against the bosses. Rather they hope to get crumbs from the bosses in return for the favor of helping tie the workers to the capitalist dominated Democratic Party. But as economic conditions get worse, we don't even get crumbs any more—just a kick in the ass. Our union leaders sit on the Republican President's wage control boards and support the Democratic politicians who are pushing for more wage controls.

Our unions are already involved in politics. We fight for a labor party as something that will be needed before it will be possible to effectively fight in the political arena for our true needs as workers. Today, the fight for a labor party is an important part of the fight against the collaborationist leadership. But until the collaborationists are thoroughly defeated, even if we can win our unions to the task of launching a mass labor party, we will have to continue to fight the collaborationists within the labor party for a program that really meets working peoples' needs.

**VII. An organized class struggle movement:** As Marxists, we understand that political objectives can best be accomplished through organization. We argue to workers that it will take an organized class struggle movement to effectively lead a fight to rebuild our unions and to reclaim them from the collaborationist class traitors who now control them. We concretize this by fighting for local caucuses and national caucuses and for the need to win them to policies and programs based on class struggle unionist principles. We also raise the idea for a broader class struggle movement based on these principles to connect up workers from different unions together with unorganized workers, unemployed workers, black, minority and community organizations. Without generating illusions about the speed at which this can happen, this is the task we pose.

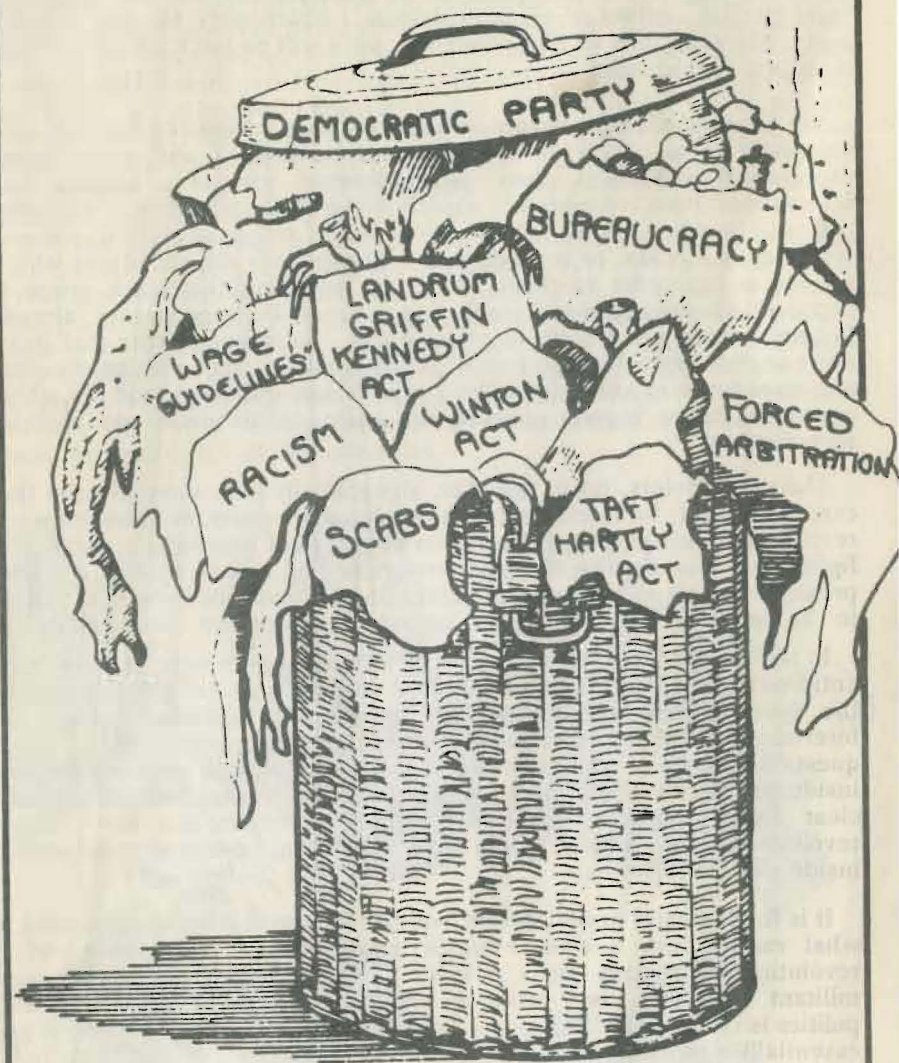
To summarize, class struggle unionists are trade union militants committed to:

1. Class struggle approach
2. Rank and file orientation
3. Workers control
4. Class solidarity
5. Championing liberation and support to all struggles against oppression
6. Labor's need for our own party
7. An organized class struggle movement

## 5. A Bridge to Revolutionary Marxism

The IS is a socialist, revolutionary marxist organization whose members are all militant class struggle unionists. Class struggle unionism is one important part of revolutionary Marxism. But Marxism involves much

## IT'S TIME TO TAKE



## OUT THE GARBAGE



more than just class struggle unionism. It is the science that gives a proletarian class answer to all questions confronting the working class; it represents the crystalization of the international class memory and class experience of the working class; it represents the understanding that there is an emerging international crisis of immense proportions and that on a international scale, either the working class will take power, or civilization will be destroyed. The IS represents an organized commitment to fight to build the US section of an international revolutionary Marxist workers party. Marxism tells us that either the party will be built, or the working class will be defeated.

We use the political concepts embodied in the principles of class struggle unionism as a bridge from today's consciousness and trade union experience to Marxist ideas. An individual who in a serious way internalizes these concepts will rapidly move in the direction of our total politics. Besides the IS, there exists no a single organized political tendency of any size or consequence whose politics are consistent with a serious commitment to them. No. 1 by asserting that labor peace is impossible because of basic conflicting interests between classes, already begins to weed out reformists. Nos. 2 and 3 include concepts that gnaw away at the very core of stalinism. No. 6 is inconsistent with syndicalism and most forms of anarchism. No. 7 rejects dual unionism, and the whole approach, taken together, rejects anti-union spontaneism and abstract sectarianism.

The seven points, taken together, algebraically pose a set of tasks that can, in fact, only be carried out by a revolutionary party, or at least a mass revolutionary workers organization on the verge of becoming a party. The fight to win workers to a thorough understanding and acceptance of these principles, in terms of immediate tasks, is in a sense the fight to win them to the need for a party that can organize to carry out these tasks.

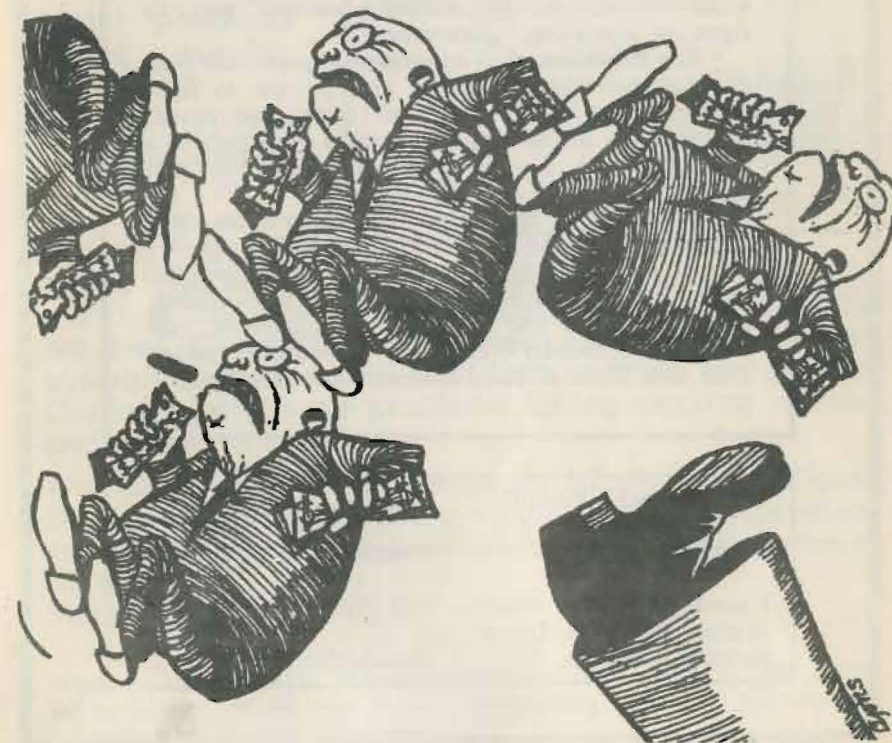
In the middle '60's, politically serious students who were anti-stalinist, anti-Democratic Party, and who favored non-sectarian full participation in the mass movements, joined the Independent Socialist Clubs, the forerunner of the International Socialists. Once they were sure on these questions, they were willing to receive the rest of their political training inside the organization. Today we want politically serious workers, who are clear on the questions of class struggle unionism and have drawn revolutionary conclusions, to join the IS and learn the rest of their politics inside the organization.

It is fundamental to our perspective that the world crisis of capitalism is what makes both a class struggle rank and file movement and a revolutionary workers party possible. In life, the "bridge" between militant unionism, class struggle unionism and revolutionary marxist politics is the nature of the crisis. The ideas of class struggle unionism are essentially a reflection of that objective reality and the contradictions in it. As ideas they embody the direction the struggle must take to succeed at any point. Without the crisis they would be ideas that could not win a mass following. By themselves, the principles of class struggle unionism appear timeless. Seen as a bridge in today's context, however, they provide the means for educating workers on the nature of the capitalist crisis by relating it to their experience today.

IS members entered industry, for the most part, just as the rank and file

rebellion of the late 1960's reached its limits. Nixon's New Economic Policy and the employers' speed-up offensive succeeded in destroying the momentum of that movement and we spent three years experiencing that defeat—a defeat of the entire working class. Nevertheless, the trade union work carried out by the IS, especially given the small forces at our disposal, has been qualitatively superior to that of any other leftist organization in this country. The members of our tiny industrial fractions have established themselves as respected militants and unionists. We have participated in building well-read and well-respected publications, we have made strides towards establishing real caucuses, we have joined and helped lead numerous struggles and campaigns, and our work has had significant influence on the consciousness of broad layers of workers around us. Most important, our trade union work has become the center of the life of the organization, and helped place us solidly on the road toward becoming a workers' organization.

Now we are working to complete the transformation of the IS into a revolutionary workers organization. Our approach is to group around the IS a milieu of workers won to a conscious conception of themselves as class struggle unionists, and to recruit increasing numbers of revolutionary workers to the organization out of that milieu. This strategy for building a revolutionary party and our conception of the rank and file movement (the material embodiment of class struggle unionism) is one of the distinct characteristics of IS politics—and a unique contribution to the struggle for socialism in the US of the seventies.





# International Socialists

## We stand for:

- **International Socialism:** the replacement of decaying capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism ("Communism") by a revolution from below, controlled by the working class and aimed at democratic rule over all social institutions.

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